

# Washington Forest Protection Association

## Teachers on Summer Assignment (TOSA)

*"When you can bring real-life experiences in, there is a real impact on the students - as opposed to reciting from textbooks or a PBS video. They can relate to it." 1997 TOSA*

**Background:** The Teacher on Summer Assignment program is a professional development opportunity that provides teachers in grades K-12 with hands-on assignments in the environmental and business aspects of forest product companies. Through TOSA, teachers and their students:

1. Expand and deepen their understandings about the environment.
2. Improve critical thinking, research and problem-solving skills.
3. Learn and teach about forest related concepts through quality balanced "lessons" that link actual work experience with a forest company to classroom instruction.

Teachers work directly with professionals in the forest industry who are responsible for protecting water quality, reforestation, sustainable forestry, and conserving fish and wildlife habitat.



Through their actual work in the field such as marking stream buffers, inventorying habitats, and surveying forestland, teachers find specific way to help students make connections between the classroom and the environment. Some teachers work as part of team doing research in a laboratory and enjoy putting their knowledge of chemistry, biology or physics to work.



**Action:** The Washington Forest Protection Association has broadened the impact of teachers' 6-week summer work assignment with a forest company by providing opportunities for teachers to post their lessons, photographs and students' work on-line for other teachers and students to access.

[www.wfpa.org/TOSA/index.htm](http://www.wfpa.org/TOSA/index.htm)

**Result:** Views of teachers involved in TOSA program since 1995 remain very positive:

- On a 0-10 scale (where 0 is very low and 10 is very high), teachers' ratings of the host company's commitment and efforts to protect the environment moved from 4.8 prior to the program to 8.1 after the program. The concept of sustainable forestry and replanting of trees is central to this shift.
- Average teacher reaches an average of 200 students with their TOSA curriculum, and they share their experience with colleagues and friends.
- Nearly all say they are better teachers as a result of the TOSA experience - because they can bring real-world experience into the class, have a broader knowledge base, a more balanced view of environmental issues and can provide career advice to students.

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